

Testimony

Senate Bill 2248

Senate Judiciary Committee

January 31, 2005; 9 a.m.

North Dakota Department of Health

Good morning, Chairman Traynor and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee. My name is Darleen Bartz, and I am section chief of the Health Resources Section for the North Dakota Department of Health. I am here to request the addition of the Department of Health to the list of state agencies in the Section 4 amendment of Senate Bill 2248.

The addition of the Department of Health to the list of agencies will allow the department to request criminal history checks when necessary and to implement pending federal legislation that, if enacted, may require criminal history checks for registered, certified or licensed health-care professionals.

Our current needs include criminal background checks or histories of:

- Employees in the Division of Chemistry and Division of Microbiology related to bioterrorism and homeland security issues – about six per year.
- Individuals requesting that a finding of neglect be removed from the nurse aid registry listing so they may return to work in nursing facilities – about seven to eight requests per year.
- Individuals, such as certified nurse aids, dietary aids, or emergency medical personnel, who are under investigation by the department related to complaints filed against them – five or six per year.

Potential future needs include criminal background checks or histories for:

- Licensure, certification or registration of nurse aids or other employees working in certified health-care facilities – more than 6,000 per year.
- Public Health Emergency Volunteer Reserve members. Currently, 400 individuals have registered, but it is anticipated that this number may grow to several thousand. No decision has been made related to conducting criminal background checks on these individuals; however, it is under discussion.

Based upon our current number of requests for criminal background checks and the potential for more, we request that an amendment to include the Department of Health be added to this bill.

This concludes my testimony. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.